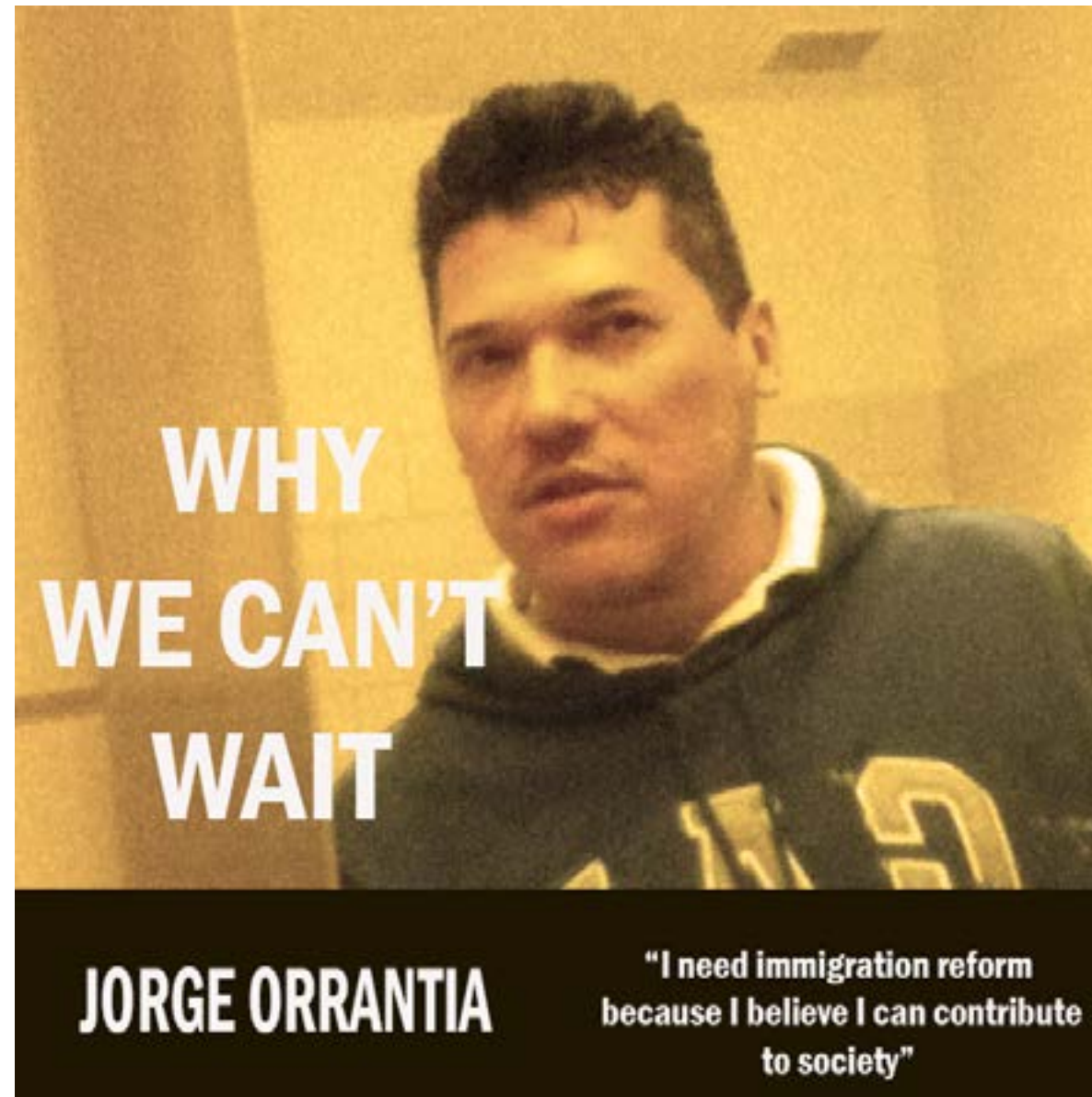


A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS



MY NAME IS JORGE ORRANTIA AND THIS IS MY STORY

“My name is Jorge Orrantia. I’m an immigrant from Sinaloa, Mexico and I’d like to tell you my immigrant story.”

-WHY I’M HERE?-

When I was 11 months old, I got sick with Polio on my right leg. I grew up being different from everyone else. I was special. In September of 1987, just a month after turning 18, I came to the United States to get medical help because of the limited medical options available to me in Mexico. Within a few months of my arrival to Los Angeles and a couple operations on my leg, I started walking straight and standing tall.

It was a big difference in my life. I was impressed by the expertise of the doctors and the generosity of the American people. I was so young and didn’t understand much of the things around me. I spoke no English, but I wondered who these great people, who treated me so kindly and so unselfishness and made me feel so welcomed, were? I said to myself that someday I’d be like them. I wanted to repay what they’ve done for me. I wanted to give back to others what I received back then. Twenty six years later, I have not forgotten that promise. I am still waiting for a chance to reach that goal to fully contribute to society and give back.

-EDUCATION IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS -

I did not plan to stay in the United States permanently, but waiting for medical appointments kept extending the time for me to return back to Mexico.

So, I while I waited to complete my medical treatment, I decided work on my first goal to fulfill my promise to give back: to learn English.

I enrolled at my local Community Adult School. I knew that if I wanted to succeed in the future, I would have to master the English language. Knowing Spanish was great, but English would take me farther in my future endeavors.

I began taking ESL classes at night in September of 1987, the same month I arrived in the USA. I made many new friends and met wonderful teachers. I finished my English classes and continued into the Reading and Language labs. There, I would improve my reading and my vocabulary. I would also learn about grammar and idiomatic expressions. In the summer of 1989, I got my 8th grade certificate. So, my next goal was to get a U.S. high school diploma.

When I enrolled in the High School program, I met a wonderful teacher that changed my life forever. Her name was Sandy. I remember a sign she had in the classroom that read: "Soar like an eagle, the mind has no limits."

So, I decided to soar like an eagle. When she was around me, I knew I could fly. She made me feel that I could accomplish anything. She showed me by example how to always give my best, how to find my gifts, how to devote myself to anything worthwhile doing, and above all, how to share myself with others.

She was, is, and continues to be my inspiration in many of the things I do. With her help, I received a GED certificate and graduated from high school in June, 1990. It was a big accomplishment for me: less than three years earlier, I could hardly walk, I spoke no English, and now I had a high school diploma. By now, I had forgotten that I was going to return to Mexico and my tourist visa had long expired. I wanted to get an education so badly so that I could start giving back to the people, the city, and the country that helped me so much.

So, on to my next goal: college.

My teacher Sandy introduced me to computers. I enrolled at Los Angeles Valley College in the Fall of 1990. I began taking all the computer and programming classes I could. Sandy had also discovered that I had an interest in math. And since math and computers are very related, I decided to study both subjects. I graduated from Los Angeles Valley College in May of 1996. I received two Associate Degrees: an Associate of Science in Computer Science and Associate of Arts in Mathematics. Time to go into business and put my education on hold.

1996 was the beginning of a revolution. The Internet was beginning to change people's lives. The Web was becoming very popular. The Internet was growing and a few of my friends realized that. We formed a company that would provide Internet services. I would become the network administrator and webmaster. I learned so much in this endeavor. Unfortunately, like many other Internet companies of the time, our company didn't succeed as much as I wanted it. So in 2001, I had to leave and continue my education.

I enrolled in California State University, Northridge in the Fall of 2002. I graduated from CSUN in December, 2004 with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Computer Science. A few years later in 2008, I would return back to CSUN to graduate school. In May 2012, I received my Master's of Science degree in Computer Science.

-PRESENT TIME -

Most of my life, I've tried to succeed through education so that I can improve my life and give back to others.

I have not been able to do so, since I find myself as being one of the #11Million undocumented immigrants in this country who cannot get a job or build the company that we dreamed of. When the time was right to correct my legal status, I got to the back of the line when my U.S. citizen sister sponsored me in April, 2001.

Since then, I've been waiting on that line, patiently. For 13 years I have been checking the Department of State's Visa Bulletin. At the present time, March 2014, the bulletin states that the department is processing applications from people from Mexico in the fourth preference with priority date of 15NOV96. That means I should get my immigrant visa in another 8 years. But it's really more like another 20 years because of some bizarre reason I have never understood. Something is clearly wrong with that system and needs to be improved.

Having no chance to get the job that I prepared for so intensely for many years and be given an opportunity to put my education to good use, I decided to get involved in pushing the U.s. Congress to pass Immigration Reform.

What else could I do having so much time at my disposal but to join others and help. For the last few months I have been working with FWD.us as a volunteer code squad member.

I am helping in the development of the most advanced advocacy apps to give people the tools they need to keep in touch with their legislators in Washington and influence immigration reform legislation.

I am also very happy to be part of A Nation of Immigrants, a group of immigrants in Facebook who are working together to share our immigrant stories with others and members of Congress. We are actively calling our representatives, posting messages on their FB timelines, tweeting, and more. I also support the young people who were brought to this country as children. In fact, I support all young people. They are the future of our country and the world. I was young like them, and I appreciate all those who helped me through the years.

It's been a long time since I made the promise to give back to the people who helped me when I first arrived to this country. I have been constantly told that I couldn't do many things or get the same legal protections or benefits as others because of my immigration status. I have not minded all the obstacles and barriers that I have faced and overcome. I have not minded not being able to visit my 82 year-old mother and family in Mexico for 20 years. I have not minded that I was not able to collect unemployment insurance when I lost my job I had for almost 20 years even though I paid into it.

Sometimes I feel that's the small price I had to pay for my transgressions. But what I do mind is my inability to start giving back to the people and the community that helped me so much when I first arrived to America. But I have hope for the future. The day will come when I will fulfill my goal. I overcame polio. I got a world-class education in computer science. And I'm ready to go and serve others. My time to give back is soon arriving. I realized many years ago that I became just like the people who helped me. I also realized that I am an American at heart. No papers necessary for that.

I hope in the not too-far-distant future, Congress finally does the right thing and gives all of my immigrant brothers and sisters an opportunity to live our lives to the fullest and allow us to give back to this great country of ours by fixing our broken immigration system once and for all. Our country will be better for this.

Jorge says:

“Please share my story with Congress to help pass
immigration reform.”